DAWN

METRO South

KARACHI Tuesday, January 20, 2026

KARACHI

Sunset	06:06pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow)	07:17am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum	13°C
Maximum	26°C
Humidity	65%
Outlook	Sunny

Djokovic romps to Melbourne win; Gauff, Swiatek move on

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Plea for action against officials lands in SHC

KARACHI: A petition was filed in the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday, seeking the initiation of "criminal, departmental and contempt proceedings" against officials found responsible for the Gul Plaza fire.

In their petition, Advocate Saleem Michael and Muhammad Haris named the Sindh government, Sindh Building Control Authority, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, chief fire officer, Sindh Emergency Rescue Service director general, South deputy commissioner and director general of civil defence as respondents.

They stated that the "tragedy was not an unavoidable accident but a direct consequence of gross negligence, failure of inspection, non-enforcement of safety laws and maladministration by the respondents who are legally bound to ensure building and fire safety".

Referring to a 2020 SHC order relating to public safety, fire prevention and protection of human life, the petitioners stated that despite a passage of more than four years, the respondents had "wilfully, deliberately and contumaciously failed to implement" the court directions.

The petitioners pleaded that the court declare that the Gul Plaza incident occurred "due to negligence, maladministration and failure of statutory duties by the respondents".

They further sought the court's directions for the respondents to initiate criminal, departmental and contempt proceedings against responsible officials.

The petitioners further urged the court to order a judicial or independent technical inquiry into fire safety compliance at commercial buildings across Karachi. —Staff Reporter

AN elderly woman, who lost three family members in the massive Gul Plaza blaze, waits for the completion of a search operation. Policemen (right) stop a large number of people, including traders, at a safer distance from the burning building.—Reuters / Fahim Siddiqi / White Star

Another day of anguish as search for missing persons continues

- Amid fading hope, relatives of those trapped question pace of rescue efforts, lack of equipment
- Misinformation, rumours fuel frustration among families; death toll climbs to 21

By Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Day three of frustrating and agonising wait remained witness to more heartbreaking scenes outside the burning Gul Plaza.

The first responders, headed by the firefighters were back to work at 8am after taking a break during the night. The fire was still not fully under control until late afternoon.

Family members of people still missing and feared to be trapped inside were slowly returning to their positions across the road on all three sides of the ill-fated building from where they watched with crazed eyes while being kept at bay by the Sindh Rangers.

Some silently recited Quranic verses as they prayed for the safe recovery of their loved ones. Others losing control openly showered abuses at the government. All were of the view that rescue work was too slow.

Some bystanders who only came to extend moral support said that maybe the gas in the air conditioners in the building was highly inflammable and making it harder for the firefighters to control the blaze which would erupt again from here or there after being put out. Some were worried that the cars on the roof of Gul Plaza, the building's parking area, still had fuel in their tanks, which was also going to add to the fire.

A guard, who said he worked on the roof of the building, said that he still has the keys to a family's car parked on the roof. "They gave me the keys, requesting me to move around their vehicle so it doesn't get blocked by anyone parking behind it, as they would only be an hour shopping inside. They never returned," he shared.

One man, Mohammed Ahmed, venting by loudly by shouting abuses at the government or whoever came in his way, was also mourning the loss of his four shops in Gul Plaza.

"I had four crockery shops here, two my own and two rented out by me along with 10 to 12 employees who are all missing. I am crying for them and the six to seven crores that I lost," he cried.

A father, Gulfaz, said that he arrived there at 7am on Sunday in the hope of finding his son, Mohammed Usman, who worked in a crockery shop on the second floor.

"I finished night duty at the factory I work in to reach here directly after my brother and other son informed me that Usman was missing in the fire. I have not moved from here since but today is the third day of this fire, what can I hope for now?" he asked.

"There was some hope yesterday when we heard that some 40 people had been rescued from under the mosque's collapsed roof inside. We hurried to the hospitals, wherever they were supposed to be taken, and nothing. It was false news. Why do people spread such lies in times like this?" he said wiping his tears.

Another ray of hope came during the night when many people claimed to have heard calls for help from inside which turned out to be someone's imagination as no one was found upon investigation.

Some also saw someone flashing a cellphone light from inside one of the barred windows on the third floor. The crowd below was hysterical as they screamed at the fire fighters to break open the window grills. They did cut the grills and called out to whoever was supposedly flashing the light but there was no response. "It could have been a reflection or a laser pointer or something but it, too, turned out to be a false alarm," said an eyewitness of the incident.

Yusra Ali, district incharge of Rescue 1122, told *Dawn* that they have teams entering Gul Plaza from the Rimpa Plaza side.

"We have searched from that side to find no survivors, even though chances of survival in a third-degree fire level are close to none. Even the bodies being recovered are so charred that we can't even make out their gender. Still, people are bringing us photos of their loved ones to look for inside," she shook her head sadly.

The family of Annas, who could not be found although his cousin Danish escaped alive by jumping to the Rimpa Plaza parking terrace, had returned, too. His sister questioned why rescue efforts were so slow.

"We have nothing else to do but wait here and watch the firefighters at work. It is the third day and they still have not been able to control the fire.

"They run out of water every 15 minutes. They are only wearing disposable surgical masks, not even one of them has a gas mask or a torch helmet. There is no difference between an ordinary person and a firefighter here due to lack of equipment," the sister pointed out.

"Had there been a president, prime minister or politician stuck inside, there would have been helicopters hovering over Gul Plaza," she regretted.

Six policemen held for raping girl in Jacobabad police station

By Waseem Shamsi

SUKKUR: Six policemen, including an assistant sub-inspector, were arrested and booked in a case pertaining to subjecting a girl to a sexual assault during custody in a Jacobabad police station, officials said on Monday.

The FIR was registered after Jacobabad SSP Mohammad Kaleem Malik conducted an inquiry into allegations levelled by the victim girl in a video statement. A preliminary medical examination report also confirmed that the victim was subjected to gang rape.

The victim girl, along with her sister and grandmother, was picked up by police as part of a murder probe. They remained locked up in the RD-52 police station, Taluka Thul for days.

The SSP said in a video statement that acting on the directives of the inspector general of police (IGP) he conducted an inquiry regarding rape charges and found that the six policemen raped the girl in custody in the absence of the SHO.

The victim was taken to the Thul Taluka Hospital, where Dr Husna Channa examined her and collected samples for DNA testing.

The SSP suspended the six policemen and ordered their arrest.

The case was registered on the complaint of the victim's grandmother under Sections 375-A (rape), 344 (wrongful confinement for 10 or more days), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Meanwhile, District and Sessions Judge Syed Sharafuddin Shah took notice of the custodial rape and issued notices to the investigating officer (IO) and all involved parties for Tuesday (today).

6th Karachi 10-K Marathon postponed

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The 6th Commissioner Karachi 10-K Marathon, scheduled for Jan 25, has been postponed following the tragic fire incident at Gul Plaza.

Speaking to ***Dawn***, Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi said the decision to postpone the marathon was taken as a mark of respect for the victims and due to the prevailing situation after the inferno episode.

Officials said the event, which had attracted 3,850 participants, including 850 women and 150 individuals above 50 years old, was likely to be rescheduled, but no date was announced yet.

They said the 6th edition of the 10-K run was now expected to be held in February subject to the weather conditions.

They said that a thrilling route for the 10-km race had earlier been finalised which would start at the Merewether Clock Tower, proceed via Native Jetty Bridge, M.T. Khan Road, Mai Kolachi Bypass, Boat Basin, Schon Circle, Clifton Bridge, Marriott Hotel, and Metropole Hotel signal into Club Road, culminating at the Commissioner's office.

Five competitive categories had been created for the run, with separate entries for children and persons with special needs. Winners in each category will receive cash prizes while every participant who completes the race within the stipulated time will be awarded a medal.

PA witnesses heated debate over Gul Plaza tragedy

MQM-P stages walkout; labour minister vows to restore traders' businesses, prevent such incidents in future

By Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly session on Monday was rocked by a heated debate and protest over the devastating Gul Plaza fire incident, with Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) members boycotting the proceedings.

Tensions flared in the house as MQM-P members started protesting when Deputy Speaker Anthony Naveed allowed Labour Minister Saeed Ghani to address the house on the Gul Plaza fire incident, while not allowing Opposition Leader Ali Khurshidi to speak.

The MQM-P members chanted anti-government slogans and stormed out of the Sindh Assembly as the labour minister continued his speech amid ruckus, defying their protest.

PTI lawmakers and Jamaat-i-Islami's lone MPA Muhammad Farooq remained seated, refusing to join the MQM-P boycott.

The labour minister said that the provincial government was open to discussing the Gul Plaza tragedy, assuring that all members wishing to speak would be given the opportunity to do so.

He assured the house that the Sindh

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'Furqan was always willing to put himself at risk to save others'

By Imran Ayub

KARACHI: The city paid tribute to the sacrifice and bravery of firefighter Furqan Ali, who embraced martyrdom while battling a deadly fire during a firefighting operation at Gul Plaza.

Ali, 36, was associated with the Nazimabad Fire Station and had been serving in the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) Fire Department since 2018. He was appointed on a deceased quota after his father, also associated with the fire department, passed away while in service.

MARTYRED firefighter Furqan Ali

"Despite his young family and personal responsibilities, he remained steadfast in his duty, responding to emergencies with courage and selflessness. Colleagues describe him as disciplined, hardworking and always willing to put himself in harm's way to save others," said his maternal uncle Aftab Ahmed.

The youngest among seven siblings, Ali carried the responsibility of supporting his family with determination and dedication. Married just a year and a half ago, Ali was the father of a seven-month-old boy.

City Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Monday evening visited

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Opposition alliance vows to eschew violence during Feb 8 demos

On last day of their Sindh visit, TTAP leadership speaks to lawyers at SHCBA programme, visits Gul Plaza

By Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: Asking the people of Sindh to join their upcoming nationwide protest call to mark the second anniversary of the general elections on Feb 8, Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) leadership said that the protesters would not resort to violence.

"We don't want a civil war in the country. Let's make Pakistan a democratic country, where people have the power, and there is rule of law and the Constitution," said Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and TTAP head Mahmood Khan Achakzai while speaking at a programme organised by the Sindh High Court Bar Association on Monday.

Speaking at the programme titlted 'Protecting the Basic Structure of the Constitution', he said that although the "spirit of freedom is being crushed among the youth", the TTAP protesters would not resort to violence on Feb 8.

"We are not here to fight people. Countries are not run at gunpoint. The Constitution is the social contract with the people. Injustice breeds disharmony among people. We want the formation of a new Pakistan, where there is no cruelty," he said.

Monday was the last day of the TTAP leadership's Sindh visit as part of the street mobilisation drive ahead of the Feb 8 nationwide protest call of the alliance to commemorate the second anniversary of the general elections.

The opposition leader was of the view that there was a need to make "a new and democratic Pakistan" where the rule of law and supremacy of the Constitution must prevail.

He said that people of all races and languages should be treated equally as the country was facing difficulties because of "rogue and arbitrary behaviours".

The head of the TTAP also stated that they were a group of decent people and that the line of respect should not be crossed in politics, adding that the small provinces had also rendered sacrifices in the freedom movement for Pakistan.

The opposition leader was also of the view that there was no accountability for the expenditure of funds received through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

About the inferno at Karachi's Gul Plaza shopping mall, he asked why the building did not have emergency exits. He said that this issue should be investigated and those responsible should be brought to justice.

Mr Achakzai further contended that the PTI founder Imran Khan had won the 2024 general election, but his way to power was blocked, which was not only unconstitutional but also religiously incorrect.

Criticising the government, the vice chairman of the opposition alliance, Allama Raja Nasir Abbas of the Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen said that the Constitution has been made "controversial", maintaining that people were losing confidence in the rulers and the public was facing oppression.

"The entire system is being employed for unlawful acts," he alleged and said that the 26th and 27th Amendments to the Constitution were latest assault on fundamental rights and democratic as well as judicial freedoms.

In an indirect reference to the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, he was of the view that the three pillars of the state were weakening.

Highlighting the strategic location of Pakistan in the region, he termed it the "heart of Asia" and further claimed that global powers have always tried to keep the country under their control.

PTI leader Asad Qaiser said that the country could not make any progress the way it was being run. He also alleged that the government was interfering in lawyers' bodies and efforts were being made to weaken the voice of lawyers.

"The executive has become an authority over the judiciary and the trust of people in the judiciary is eroding", he added.

The PTI leader also lamented the "unfair distribution of resources" in the country, adding that the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan was "chaotic".

He further maintained that the 1973 Constitution had been discarded and said the TTAP would need everyone's support for the upcoming protest to "restore the judiciary and establish the Constitution's supremacy".

The vice president of the opposition alliance Syed Zain Shah, president of SHCBA Haseeb Jamali and others also spoke on the occasion.

Meanwhile, the TTAP leadership visited Gul Plaza to express their deep sorrow over the loss of life and property caused by the devastating fire. They described the incident as a national tragedy.

Demanding a judicial inquiry into the catastrophe, Allama Abbas said: "Had the system been effective, dozens of families would not today be wandering from place to place in search of their loved ones."